

Nailsea and District Croquet Club
Minutes of the Zoom Committee Meeting 7th January 2021

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Present: Graham MaCausland, Andrew Wimshurst, Erica Malaiperuman, Brian Roynon, Peter Dyke, Sandra Morgan

1. **Apologies:** David Hunt unexpectedly thwarted by loss of broadband.
2. **Minutes of last meeting (26/112020):** agreed and signed by EM on behalf of GMc.
3. **Matters arising:** There are 41 units of the 100 club sold so far this year. There is still time for members to join. Brenda made the, delayed, last draw for 2020, from home, at the meeting. The winners being Mike Tracy, Denis Hall, Mary Hogg.
4. **Treasurer's report:** discussed and noted.
5. **Membership:** Forms for renewing membership will be sent out this week to all existing members. Members who have dropped out during the last couple of years will also be sent forms in a second wave. Our membership is dangerously near the minimum of 67 members. Although our expenditure doesn't change, our income has been drastically reduced this year. There is also a danger that we will need to outsource for work at the club. Apart from our recruitment programme this year, we aim to encourage all members, when the lawns open, to find new members from their own acquaintances.

Action:A.W.
6. **Fixtures report:** Discussed and noted. Peter will continue to contact players for the league teams, he feels there will be fewer teams playing this year.

Action: Peter to contact Marcus
7. **One Ball Competition:**

Action: Peter to contact Marcus
7. **O.B.E:** Happy to go ahead, suggested date Tuesday 18th May.

Action: Graham to email Terry
8. **Competitions:** No decisions to be made yet, we will wait until the end of February.
9. **Lawn maintenance report:** discussed and noted; regarding short croquet hoop holes, Peter has now been informed (post meeting) by John Grimshaw that the short croquet competition will not take place. James Galpin will be free to help prepare the lawns from the end of February, before he begins his apprenticeship with the Royal Auxillary Fleet on April 26th. The provisional date for the lawns to open is Saturday 3rd April.

Erica will seek John's advice as to whether players may use the small lawn 5 during March.
10. **Recruitment report:** discussed and noted, (especially the gorillas.)This report bodes well. Graham has contacted Percival regarding Junior mallets. There are 3 different sizes with varying discounts depending on the quantity we buy. Peter thinks we should wait because we could probably get a CA grant for the purchase.

Action Peter.
11. **AOB: Open Day.** This will be kept in mind as a likely event, (even though it does require a lot of preparation) since Covid could have made a difference as to how people behave. After vaccinations and since Croquet is a "safe and socially distanced sport" it might appeal to more people. It could even be held as late as in June or July. (depending on how the pandemic pans out.)

Lawn booking system: The committee agreed that in the role of administrator, Graham could add the phone numbers of players onto the lawn booking page to enable better communication between players.

Coaching and recruitment. Peter pointed out the the SWF had discussed at length in their last meeting how new members might be introduced to croquet and how players could be instructed in both disciplines. Roger Mills, the new coaching coordinator is keen to support clubs with coaching at any level.

Christine Hayley’s mallet. Graham to contact David Hunt or Tony Willoughby about putting her name on the mallet (Mike’s letraset was not forthcoming)

12. DONM: Zoom meeting on Thursday February 18 at 10.00

The meeting closed at 11.30
Signed as a true and accurate account.

Name.....
Signature.....

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Recruitment Report for meeting on 7 Jan 2021

I have many ideas but obviously it’s impossible to plan the timing of any of them yet.

1. Target people who come to Tuesday evening Socials – leaflets and £5 discount on lessons.
2. Invite groups for competitive evenings/afternoons of GC with explanations of AC at some stage in session. Include the Nailsea football, rugby, cricket and bowls clubs.
3. The Nailsea Active facebook group is very promising with various runners and cyclists already interested in trying croquet. Glen Schmidt is doing a tremendous job for the Tyntersfield GP practices. His remit is to get the population of Nailsea active for their physical and mental welfare, post-Covid. He has created a very supportive group of people. I think there are some Mental Health issues there and people are aware that they need to get out and do things. We could have a dedicated taster session for them, with some form of gentle competition involved.
4. The Active Across Ages initiative with the CA and Bowls Club – Peter leading on this. If we get individual Juniors from this, can we target the parents by inviting them to stay and play instead of dropping off?
5. The Scouts that had planned to come in 2020 will probably be pleased to come in 2021. I will pursue when the Covid situation looks clearer.
6. I sold 2 vouchers for lessons – for a couple who live in Audley Redwood. Bought by their daughter who lives close to Club – perhaps we can target her as well- invite her to watch lessons?
7. We have had an enquiry from a lady plus 2 children (girl aged 13 and boy aged 6) who have just moved in to Avening Close. I am supplying a form for lessons for the adult and will put Peter in touch with her for the Juniors.

8. General Taster Sessions – as we had planned for 2020. We planned 3 sessions, different days of the week and different times of day. Promote in NS Times, Nailsea Paper and local Facebook pages

Other points to note:

- (a) The “Nailsea Paper” has given us free editorial in several winter editions on the promise of a paid ad when we have something specific to promote and I would like to honour this.
- (b) As the Recruitment Team (Erica and I), we are not convinced that a traditional Open Day yields much fruit. If the Committee were to organise one, we would, of course, support it on the day and snap up any prospects.
- (c) The following people are willing to teach Beginners: Andrew, Linda, John Hancock, Kathy. I think Libby and Terry will be happy to assist and so will Brigit. They are all very good and there may well be others.
Linda has indicated a willingness to continue to co-ordinate general coaching but Erica and I will arrange lessons for beginners.
- (d) Should we be buying some smaller mallets suitable for Juniors? Nottingham CC bought a supply from Mike Percival: <https://www.croquetmallets.co.uk/basicmallets.html>. There are discounts for 5 or more mallets. There might be funding for this from the CA as part of their Active Across Ages project.

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Treasurer’s report for NDCC committee meeting 7th January 2021

This report has been prepared on 6th January 2021.
Spreadsheet for the financial year is attached. You can print the summary page if you wish by going to the High Level Actuals worksheet tab.
Balance at the bank is less un-presented cheques £15,506.05. The year is showing a deficit of £897.59
There has been little financial activity since the last meeting. Membership subscriptions became due on 1st January but so far only 2 members have paid.
The request for changes to the signatories on our mandate has been resubmitted. I will make enquiries today to see if it has been auctioned. Once done I will be able to set David up for online banking and he will be able to take control.
M Tracy

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06/01/2021 Fixture Secretary’s Report for the committee meeting on 7 January 2021.
SWF Leagues 2021

At the moment it is uncertain when we will be able to start playing croquet this year or whether it will be possible to play any league games at all this season. However, assuming that the rollout of coronavirus vaccines is successful and goes as planned I am hopeful that we will be able to play league matches this year.

On Friday, 1 January 2021, I sent an email to all our playing members (with the exception of new members) enquiring which leagues they wished to play in this year assuming it was safe to do so. Thirty-three members have replied and the number of players available for each team is as follows:

Golf Croquet Leagues

Level Play League 7 (+1 when available)

Handicap League 9
High Handicap League 1

Association Croquet Leagues

League for Advanced Play 5 (+1 when available)
Federation League 8
Intermediate League 5
B League 0
Short Croquet League 5, but only one who may have a handicap of 6 or more.

Twelve members have indicated that they do not wish to play in any league this year and some members do not think it will be possible to play league matches this year. 24 members have not yet replied. There was also a certain amount of vagueness in some of the replies.

I am particularly concerned about the League for Advanced Play (LFAP). In 2019 we had three teams, one in each division. Pat Long’s team came last in division 2 and was demoted to division 3. As things stand at the moment we have enough players for only one advanced team. I suspect that if we enter the League for Advanced Play (LFAP) we would be expected to enter division 1 as our best team would be in division 1, but of those who have indicated that they wish to play in the LFAP only one member played in division 1 in 2019 and there is some doubt about his availability this year. I could contact the rest of Marcus’s team to find out if they would consider playing in the LFAP this year. Otherwise I could contact Stephen Custance-Baker, the South West Federation League Secretary, to see if he would be prepared to let us enter just one team in division 3.

As things stand at the moment I recommend that we enter the following number of teams:

GC Leagues

Level Play League – one team
division 3
Handicap League – two teams
High Handicap League – zero teams

AC Leagues

League for Advanced Play – one team in
Federation League – one team
Intermediate League – one team
B League – zero teams
Short Croquet League – zero teams unless we can find at least three players with Short Croquet handicaps of 6 or more who are willing to play.

U21 Golf Croquet World Championships

This event, due to take place at Christchurch, New Zealand, in February this year, has been postponed until February 2022 due to the coronavirus pandemic and will now be open to all players who are under 22. This means that James Galpin will still be eligible to play provided he is available.

James Galpin

This time my report on James has nothing to do with croquet. I have recently been informed that James has gained an apprenticeship with the Royal Auxiliary Fleet. He will start training at Portsmouth on 26 April 2021. He still intends to join the club this season, but his availability is uncertain. This is good news for James but not such good news for our Advanced and Level Play teams. Congratulations and best wishes James.

Peter Dyke
(06/01/2021)

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Lawn Maintenance Report – November 2020

1. Lawns

The lawns have remained soft throughout December and not fit for play due to continual high rainfall as illustrated in Figure 1. This winter has been wetter than last year which was in itself exceptionally wet.

The lawns were mowed at 8mm on 26 Nov and again on 19 December. A significant amount of grass was removed in both cases but there has been less growth since then due to lower temperatures.

Many of the Autumn weeds have disappeared but there are signs of new trefoil weeds appearing. These will be eliminated by the spring herbicide spray with Praxys. Unfortunately, the weeds have been replaced by a substantial increase in moss. Some of this was blackened by granular iron but many clumps are new. I think the best way of treating this moss is with an iron spray. I have been reluctant to spray with dissolved ferrous sulphate because it appeared to damage the internals of the pump. However, Duncan Hector assures me that many people use the soluble iron he now supplies without pump problems. I will therefore be ordering 40L (cost £88+VAT) when I put in my chemical order. Duncan also uses the soluble iron at lower concentrations to treat Red Thread. We have experienced Red Thread at Nailsea and although it does not kill the grass it does cause the foliage to die off so it is worth treating. The downside of Iron spraying is that it has a relatively high salt index and can only be applied sparingly.

The old hoop holes have all but disappeared having been backfilled with green waste and seeded with Bent. There are tiny Bent seedlings evident which confirms that Bent will slowly germinate at winter temperatures, albeit growth is very limited.

Before the cut on 19th December the rows of bent seedlings were evident on most of lawns 2 & 3 but not on lawns 1 & 2. Since the cut it is difficult to pick out the rows but the seedlings will probably be there!

I overseeded corner 2 on Lawn 3 (and a few other North boundary bare spots) with rye grass and covered the seed with green waste. To date there is little sign of germination. I will repeat the exercise at the end of January if germination is not successful.

Worm activity has substantially reduced in December, possibly partly due to the Iron application. John Hancock continues to Sarrel Roll whenever the weather permits.

2. Chemical and over-seeding programme for 2021

I have spent a significant amount of time thinking about the 2021 programme with the multiple objectives of:

- a. Staying within the draft budget sent to Mike Tracy on 11th October
- b. Improving soil fertility
- c. Reducing the presence of Annual Meadow grass

d. Increasing the proportion of Bent grass in the lawns.

Budgetary constraints have been at the forefront of my mind because during winter mowing with the Toro I repeatedly found that the right-hand front cutter unit was cutting well but dropping clumps of clippings on the ground. This is because the reel diameter is now too small to throw the clippings into the grass box. The cure is to replace the reel next Spring when new bottom blades will be fitted and the cutting height lowered. A mild reel re-grind is required when fitting a new bottom blade. Fitting a new reel also requires grinding so it makes sense to combine the two operations. The cost of a new reel component is around £350 (inc VAT) – not trivial on top of the £480ish cost of bed-knives and height adjustment. AJ Mowers wanted to replace all the reels but as the other two reels are cutting correctly I see no point in doing that. AJ Mowers are thus preparing a quote for the single reel replacement.

In view of the increased Toro expenditure I have been thinking about how to reduce chemicals expenditure. Taking each component in turn my conclusions are as follows:

a. *Attraxor Growth Regulator. (Total Cost £610)*

This product is new to the UK market but the underlying chemical (prohexadione) has been in use in the US as an alternative to the standard products based on Trinexapac. By reputation it is superior in that it suppresses Annual Meadow grass (AMG) Seed head production and thus possibly reduce the AMG presence. I have yet to find scientific evidence that it does reduce AMG presence because there is an enormous seed bank already in the ground and AMG seed also blows in with the wind. Reading US documentation suggests that US golf clubs use it to reduce seed head production because the seed heads make the golf green surface uneven. For Nailsea, the issue is more about eliminating AMG because in dry weather it dies and produces bumpy lawns.

I think that until we definitely find evidence of reduction in AMG we should not purchase Attraxor. The saving should pay for the additional Toro reel work and other fertiliser components.

b. *Duncan Hector slow release Liquid Bio, Revolution Soil Surfactant*

These are core elements of the lawn maintenance programme. The total cost will rise by £88+VAT) to cover the additional cost of soluble Iron. I will continue to experiment with Revolution dosing rates to see if we can reduce the total cost. The liquid Bio fertiliser is cost effective compared with other products on the market.

c. Additional fertiliser products.

Experience suggests that, at present the Nitrogen budget needs topping up and I propose to continue using AGS Nitro 22 which is very slow release, very low salt index and usefully contains Sulphur which soil tests suggest is low at present.

Turf rooting is still deficient at present. I believe that the inert sand layer that forms the top part of the rootzone is partly responsible for this. To improve matters, I am proposing to apply organic granular fertiliser in February and April. The April product contains humus, mycorrhizal fungi and a small amount of Phosphorous (P) to assist the new Bent seedlings. Once the seedlings have established roots in the soil beneath the sand then P will become available via the mycorrhizal fungi. In general, the "No P" philosophy continues as the soil contains 16ppm of P and this is plenty for established roots with mycorrhizal fungi present.

To further improve the soil fertility I am also applying a soil amendment called Essentials plus. This supplies food for bacteria and fungi to flourish – all part of fertile soil. I also plan to experiment with a form of concentrated compost tea derived from worm casts. The manufacturer (XLProBio) supplies its products to professional sports clubs and I think it is worth a try. There are many positive claims about the use of Compost Tea (Long Ashton Golf club spray it on regularly) but little documented scientific research. Nobody would doubt the use of compost in gardening but of course with amenity lawns, applying compost directly is a non-starter. The concentrate is a useful way of experimenting without the cost and hassle of compost tea brewing equipment.

d. Overseeding

My Bent overseeder has progressed to the point where:

The Frame supporting the hole-making sprockets is complete. First field trial on 5/1/21 was successful in terms of creating the required small holes in the soil/turf.

The important elements of the seed distribution unit have been shown to work on the bench.

Figure 2 contains a few pictures of the assembly.

I am not expecting my over-seeder to be as efficient as the professional dynaseeder. However, it is designed to sow Bent at 3grammes/square metre. This corresponds to about 30,000 seeds so we only need a fraction of them to germinate to fill in the gaps in the sward.

I am aiming for a cold-seed at the end of January using the AberRoyal cultivar from AberMajesty. This particular cultivar has been shown in field trials to reduce the presence of AMG. Germination will take place as the soil warms up but without the problems of constant irrigation to worry about.

If my experimental dynaseeder is successful then there will be some cost reduction by virtue of there being no hire cost. Offset against that will be the cost of NDCCC seeder components.

3. Lawn Rotas and Layout

This is the time of year to develop rotas and plan out the hoop hole creation for the year. This is probably best done as an LAG zoom meeting but the committee needs to take a view on whether the Short Croquet teams event is likely to take place. With the Covid 19 situation as it is that might be difficult to predict but it does affect how many small lawns need to be created. We have an acute shortage of hoop setters so it would be good to avoid futile work if there is little prospect of the event taking place.

JNW

5/1/21

Figure 1 Rainfall and ET

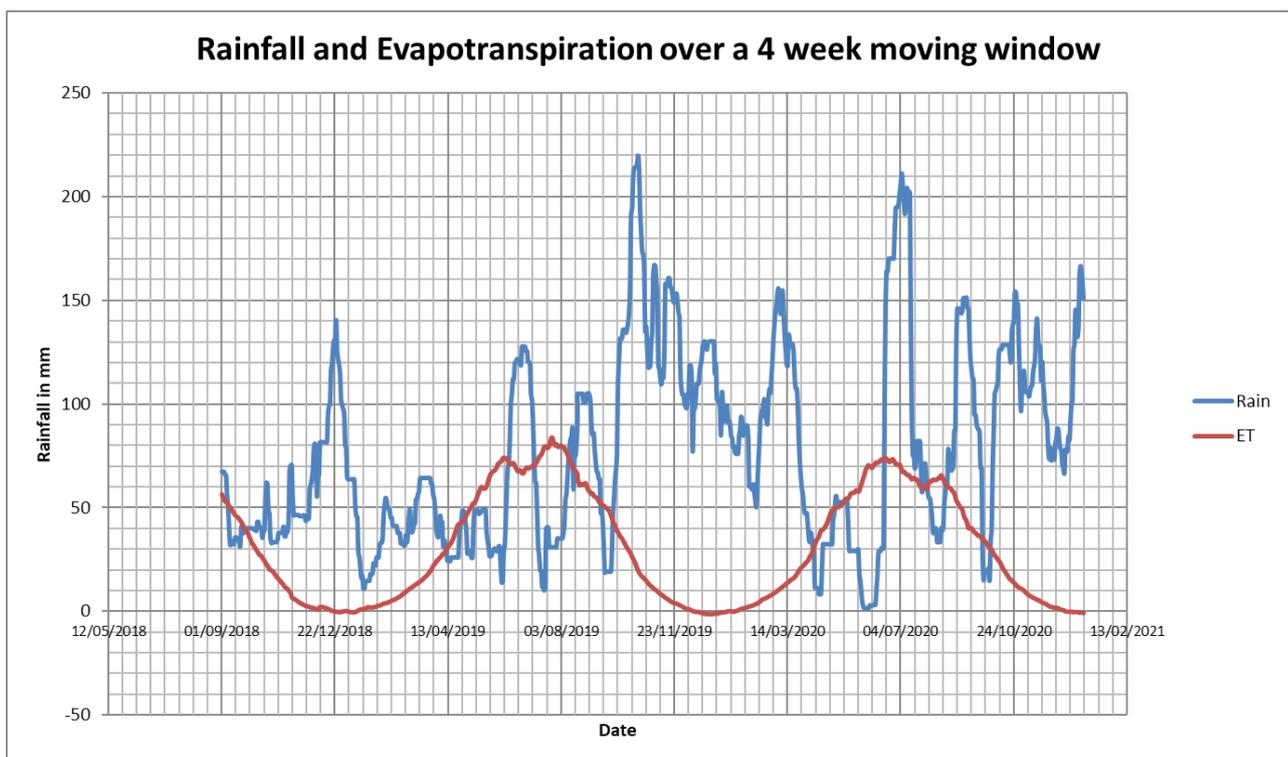


Figure 2 Elements of the Bent seeder

